

# Risky riding isn't worth the price: safety tips for safer snowmobiling

*Off Road Vehicle coverage as important as a helmet: make sure you're adequately protected before you hit the trails*

I am doing a pretty good job of assimilating into my new winter environment, but I cannot imagine I will ever purchase a snowmobile.

I just can't see myself bundling up and heading out in temperatures cold enough to make me actually think twice about breathing. I know, I know, what I consider cruel and unusual punishment, others consider the only truly redeeming quality of a Manitoba winter.

So, for the benefit of all you snowmobilers out there, or for the parents of little people hooked on the sport, I'd like to discuss sled safety.

First, let's talk about the Sled Smart Program, a highly successful joint program operated by Manitoba Public Insurance and the Snowmobilers of Manitoba, Inc. (Snoman). The program, now in its second winter of operation, plans to deliver its safe-riding message to about 7,000 junior high students in schools throughout the province.



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Snowmobiling should be fun. But, the simple fact is that too many people don't practice safe riding. The Sled Smart program deals with safe riding, proper equipment and how to avoid a serious accident. Unfortunately, since December 1 there have already been four snowmobile-related deaths, so the program's message has never been timelier, or more important.

Here are few simple reminders to make sure your afternoon adventure ends with a cup of hot chocolate, not a trip to Emergency:

- **Ride Safe, Stay on the Trail**

I know that nothing attracts riders more than untracked snow. However,

perils like logs and barbed wire are easily concealed, and potentially lethal. By the way, so is the owner of the property you just trespassed on, so please respect private property.

- **Know Before You Go - Always Check Local Ice Conditions**

Ice samples only a few feet apart can vary greatly in thickness. If you're not 100 per cent sure, don't go. Please keep in mind that this winter's strange weather patterns could have created "ice bridges" in certain areas. This occurs when heavy rains cause water levels to rise, which subsequently freeze. Then, under the ice, the water level drops again, creating a dangerous gap between the ice and the water.

- **When Night Riding, Slow Down - Expect the Unexpected**

Night riding is thrilling, but it's also more dangerous than riding by day. Cables, fences and tree stumps, nuisances by noon, are deadly at

night. Growing up, I lost a very close friend to a nighttime snowmobiling accident when he drove into a signpost he didn't see until it was too late. It was a horrific end to a young life. Trust me, these things happen if you're not careful.

- **Cross With Care - Look Before You Leap**

Make sure you have plenty of time to cross the road. Parents, make sure your children are safely across before you head over yourself. Don't take unnecessary chances. Remember, motor vehicles have the right of way at all times.

While we're on the subject of safety, may I suggest that you take a moment to think about purchasing financial protection through MPI's Off Road Vehicle coverage?

MPI offers affordable Collision and Comprehensive coverage that

protects you from snowmobile collision, fire, theft, hail, and vandalism losses.

We also offer two injury protection options, so you and your family are protected in the event of a snowmobile accident. Remember, since a snowmobile doesn't qualify as a vehicle under the Highway Traffic Act (which dictates your PIPP benefits), your injuries or the injuries you cause someone else while snowmobiling aren't covered unless you purchase additional coverage.

And lastly, you can protect yourself from being sued by someone else by purchasing extended Third Party Liability (remember, you only have \$200,000 under Basic Autopac).

That's it for this week. Until next week, be **RoadWise**.

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